

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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FRUIT AND VEGETABLE INDUSTRY
ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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MEETING

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WEDNESDAY
MAY 10, 2017

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The Fruit and Vegetable Industry
Advisory Committee met in Potomac 1 and Potomac 2
of the Hyatt Regency, 2799 Jefferson Davis
Highway, Arlington, Virginia, at 8:30 a.m., Beth
Knorr, Chair, presiding.

MEMBERS PRESENT

BETH KNORR, Chair, Executive Director, Cuyahoga
Valley Countryside Conservancy

ROBERT NOLAN, Vice Chair, Owner/Operator, Deer
Run Farms, LLC

CHRISTIE BALCH, Executive Director, Crossroads
Community Food Network

VIRGINIA BARNES, Manager, Food Safety and Public
Relations, Barnes Farm, LLP

CARLOS CASTANEDA, Principal, Castaneda & Sons,
Inc.

HELEN DIETRICH, Owner/Human Resources Manager,
Ridgeview Orchards, LLC

KRISTINE ELLOR, Mycologist/Technical Director,
Phillips Mushroom Farms

RICHARD HANAS, Vice President and Chief
Operating Officer, A. Duda & Sons, Inc.

JOHANNA HERRON, Marketing Manager, Alaska State
Department of Agriculture

MICHAEL JANIS, Market Manager, San Francisco
Wholesale Produce Market
MARTIN MALDONADO, General Manager/Supply Chain
Director, Pure Fresh, LLC
ROLAND MCREYNOLDS, Executive Director, Carolina
Farm Stewardship Association
MARK NICHOLSON, Co-Owner/Manager of Fresh Sales,
Red Jacket Orchards
PATRICK ROGERS, Owner/Operator, McAlister and
Rogers Farms
DANIEL SUTTON, General Manager, Pismo Oceano
Vegetable Exchange
HARRY TALBOTT, Vice President of Farm
Operations/Co-Owner, Talbott's Mountain
Gold, LLP
JORGE VAZQUEZ, President/CEO, Latin Specialties,
LLC
THOMAS WILLIAMS, Director, Produce and Floral,
Coborn's
DAVID YANDA, President & CEO, Lakeside Foods,
Inc.

OTHERS PRESENT

MARLENE BETTS, Acting Designated Federal
Official
ERIN MORRIS, AMS, USDA
LEANNE SKELTON, AMS, USDA

C-O-N-T-E-N-T-S

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Adjourn.73

1 P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

2 8:42 a.m.

3 MS. KNORR: Good morning, everyone.

4 If we could start taking our seats. We have
5 rearranged the schedule a little bit. We wanted
6 to make sure that we had ample time to discuss
7 the food safety proposed recommendations, so we
8 actually moved those to first thing this morning.

9 Hopefully, we can get some
10 recommendations passed out of that group. Then
11 we'll open it up to new working group
12 suggestions. We've already had two suggestions,
13 although I think the Labor Group may already have
14 something for us today, but certainly the Crop
15 Insurance Group was proposed yesterday. We'll
16 open that discussion up after our food safety
17 discussion.

18 Then we'll have a little bit of time
19 for the working groups to get together to craft
20 some language or determine next steps for
21 conference calls and potential speakers on those
22 calls. Then we'll get back together, in the

1 event that some of those committees may have some
2 proposed recommendations or statements for us.
3 We'll hear from those groups. Then shortly
4 thereafter, we will adjourn. Any questions?

5 MR. MCREYNOLDS: Madam Chair, I would
6 just flag -- Roland McReynolds -- that the Grants
7 Infrastructure Working Group definitely will have
8 -- has already started discussing a
9 recommendation that we may want to bring forward
10 after we've had a chance to discuss as a group.

11 MS. KNORR: Fantastic. Anyone else
12 that we know will have recommendations? I think
13 the Broadband Group has a statement.

14 MR. WILLIAMS: This is Tom Williams.
15 We should have something for the Market News, as
16 well.

17 MS. BALCH: This is Christie Balch.
18 We should have a statement for Produce
19 Consumption, as well.

20 MR. CASTANEDA: Ms. Chairman, or,
21 excuse me, chairwoman. This is Carlos Castaneda.
22 The Labor Group does have a statement. I don't

1 know if it's refined yet, but we'd like some
2 feedback from the group. Just let us know when
3 you're ready for it.

4 MS. KNORR: Fantastic. I think I'm
5 going to invite Roland to -- he did a great job
6 yesterday sharing the recommendations in their
7 draft form yesterday. I'm hoping that all of you
8 had a chance to read through them and make
9 comments or suggestions. I'm thinking I want to
10 open this up for a little bit of discussion
11 before we make a motion to approve. I think
12 there are probably some folks who have some
13 questions about that, so I'm going to open it up
14 to the floor to have some discussion on those.

15 I think we should discuss each one on
16 its own, but I would welcome a motion to pass all
17 of them as a slate, if we get to that point,
18 unless there are some that we feel need to be
19 modified more than others. I would welcome
20 passing all of them in one fell swoop. Roland,
21 do you want to --

22 MR. MCREYNOLDS: Yes, thank you very

1 much. First, we flag -- and perhaps Marlene can
2 put it up on the screen -- Johanna did make an
3 important suggestion, as far as the USDA-FDA
4 liaison position recommendation, in terms of
5 depersonalizing it for professional reasons. We
6 have made tweaks to take out the personal
7 references to Leanne, personally, but still to
8 maintain the principles that having a skilled,
9 experienced, knowledgeable about the produce
10 industry person serving as a liaison and making
11 sure that liaison position continues to be a
12 priority and funded by FDA. Our working group
13 would offer the version up on the screen as a
14 revised version of the hard copy we have. Other
15 than removing the references to individuals, it
16 is the same substance.

17 MR. NOLAN: Bob Nolan. I think we're
18 having trouble seeing it, at least I am. I don't
19 know. Dan, do you have 20/20 down there or what
20 do you got, 20/15 vision?

21 If it's just a matter of taking
22 Leanne's name out in that section, we can just go

1 off the hard copy, if that's all the change was,
2 just so the group knows.

3 MR. MCREYNOLDS: Functionally, that's
4 all the change was. It did require reworking
5 some sentences a little more than just crossing
6 out name. I would particularly -- the sentence
7 in the statement that throughout the process,
8 USDA staffer, Ms. Leanne Skelton, so it now says
9 -- there's two sentences that have kind of been
10 rearranged there, but it is -- yes, it is the
11 same substance.

12 MR. SUTTON: Dan Sutton. I agree with
13 the changes. I guess I'm looking for -- maybe a
14 little bit of my lack of knowledge and how
15 appointments work and things like that, but I
16 think what's been crucial to this position in the
17 past is the individual that fills that position.
18 If this does get funded, is there an opportunity
19 for the position -- that has been crucial for the
20 person that's filled that.

21 Is there an opportunity for that not
22 to be filled by Leanne? Does there need to be a

1 reference? I don't know -- I'm sorry; I don't
2 know how that works, but I think that position is
3 critical mainly because of the person that's
4 filled that spot in the past.

5 MS. HERRON: Can I -- I think at the
6 end of the day, what it always comes back to is
7 the characteristics and the qualities and
8 ensuring that we get that at each juncture, be it
9 Leanne or anybody else, it's going to be really
10 crucial longevity wise. I wonder if there's some
11 way to add something that speaks to having input
12 from this group or being involved in the process
13 or something where you can validate that any kind
14 of replacement would have the same qualities,
15 that kind of thing. Just that longevity wise, if
16 you ever put an individual, then you're risking
17 anybody being in that position that could replace
18 it. I think the qualities are the things that
19 you're going to get more out of long term.

20 MS. KNORR: I think it would be
21 appropriate to have some qualities in there, but
22 I don't think it's appropriate to recommend that

1 this committee have involvement in any way.

2 MR. MCREYNOLDS: Perhaps staff could
3 sort of enlighten us on how you'd likely handle
4 the situation, in the event that the position is
5 continued.

6 MS. MORRIS: This is Erin Morris. As
7 Beth said, it wouldn't be appropriate for the
8 committee to have any role because there are
9 hiring principles that we have to follow.

10 I think the best thing to do would be
11 to include some language in there that just
12 comments on how important certain characteristics
13 are in filling the position. Then certainly, as
14 we were going through whatever hiring process we
15 would go through, we would be able to take those
16 qualities into consideration when we're vetting
17 the applicants.

18 MR. MCREYNOLDS: The language that
19 we've got here says the USDA staff's deep
20 understanding of the fruit and vegetable industry
21 has proved invaluable. Dedicating consistent
22 personnel resources over the full -- ensuring the

1 continuity of expertise and experience are how we
2 try to address that issue of the qualities of the
3 person in the position. That was the intent of
4 this language to again, depersonalize, but still
5 make very clear what the criteria are that make
6 the work important.

7 MR. SUTTON: Dan Sutton. Roland, with
8 that explanation, I don't think that -- that
9 encompasses what's been done. I think that
10 addresses the qualities I think we all seek in
11 what this does.

12 MS. HERRON: This is Johanna. Would
13 it be worth it to look through in more detail,
14 though, and make sure all of the qualities you
15 want to see in there are there, like expertise
16 and confidence, somebody that's able to
17 communicate well on both ends? I completely
18 understand your concern. I want to make sure
19 that we're -- if it's not captured, that
20 everything is -- the way I do it at the state
21 level would be that we hire -- we seek them out,
22 and then our interview questions guide us towards

1 the right candidate that would be what we're
2 looking for. I certainly wouldn't want anything
3 to have been left out. Obviously, I hope it's
4 clear it's nothing against the person, at all,
5 either.

6 MS. KNORR: I do think, though, we
7 have to tread a fine line here. We can't write
8 the job description here. That is not our role.
9 Our role is to advise the USDA on the general
10 overarching qualities that we are hoping to
11 continue, if Leanne were to leave that position.
12 I think keeping that in mind, if we can just, in
13 broad brush strokes, capture that information,
14 that's what we're after here.

15 MR. MCREYNOLDS: This, again, is kind
16 of those two sentences that I was talking about
17 that try to finesse that in the statement.
18 Throughout the FSMA process, USDA has had a staff
19 position serving as a liaison, allowing USDA to
20 bring extensive regulatory and scientific
21 expertise and produce industry experience to bear
22 in the development of regulations, guidances, and

1 policies. Those are the qualities that are on
2 the sheet that you're looking at, again, just
3 depersonalized in this statement.

4 MR. SUTTON: Dan Sutton again. Again,
5 I want to concur with the Chair that we aren't
6 writing a job description. We're making a
7 recommendation for that position that's been
8 critical to the industry in this process.

9 MR. JANIS: This is Michael Janis. I
10 would agree with everything said. I'm just
11 wondering if we do want to add just some language
12 about the ability to effectively represent the
13 agency with a sister agency or with FDA, but
14 something about working effectively with another
15 agency. Because that sounds like one of the key
16 attributes to success.

17 MS. BETTS: Is there someplace
18 specific you want to add that language, Mike?

19 MR. JANIS: I don't. Perhaps we could
20 just do it offline, if that would be okay with
21 the Chairs, as opposed to adding it right now.

22 MR. MCREYNOLDS: This is our last day

1 -- this is our last day to make recommendations.

2 MR. SUTTON: Dan Sutton. Just to
3 speak to that point, I think, again, that's kind
4 of going into the role of that position. That's
5 the main -- I think when that position's filled,
6 that's one of the key characteristics of whoever
7 fills that position as a job description. Again,
8 I think the intent of this is to make sure that
9 this position is continued on and funded. I
10 think what we have up there achieves that.

11 MR. JANIS: I'll defer to staff. If
12 what is up there is adequate, I will pull back my
13 suggestion.

14 MS. KNORR: Any other comments or
15 suggestions at this time? Let's go ahead and
16 move on to the training piece. Any further
17 comments, Roland?

18 MR. MCREYNOLDS: I would just say that
19 we had Bruce in here yesterday talking about
20 AMS's role mediating for our industry with other
21 regulators. The PSA is one of those examples,
22 where USDA has a specific engagement with this

1 effort. This is why we felt, as a working group,
2 that it was critical for us to be providing this
3 feedback to the PSA through USDA.

4 MS. ELLOR: In discussions yesterday
5 offline, it was suggested that there were very
6 limited resources for translation. It might be
7 good to get this committee's thoughts on what the
8 couple of languages might be. They can't all be
9 done, but maybe some suggestions as to what the
10 -- if there's only resources to do a couple, what
11 should those languages be?

12 For us, I think it would be probably
13 Vietnamese and Indonesian, but I'd be interested
14 in going around and getting people's take on what
15 the best next languages would be, after the
16 Spanish launch.

17 MR. SUTTON: Dan Sutton. I agree with
18 that comment because this is a requirement of the
19 law. For anybody that's going to be covered
20 under this regulation, they have to go through
21 this training. It should be available to anybody
22 in their first language.

1 I think we need to be a little bit of
2 a realization, though, that they're not going to
3 be able to accomplish that in six months. I
4 would gather that I think it's going to be a
5 little far-fetched for them to get Spanish done
6 in that time frame. I think maybe keeping it
7 broad, I think they're going to need to determine
8 where their biggest priorities need to be. I
9 think maybe just keeping a broad statement that
10 alternative languages need to be developed and
11 offered. Then through their census data or
12 whatever, they can determine how they prioritize
13 those.

14 MS. ELLOR: Yes, specifically, some
15 staff were asking for our input on what the
16 greatest need is because they aren't going to be
17 able to do all of them. This is not for the
18 recommendation. This is just for their
19 information.

20 MS. HERRON: This is Johanna. I
21 wonder if it would be possible to have states --
22 at the state level, at the FOA level, the

1 agreements be responding. Because they're going
2 to know who is falling into that category and
3 which -- I would hate that we make a
4 recommendation, and then there's states that
5 aren't represented that would miss out on their
6 top tier and not have gotten that in.

7 MS. KNORR: Perhaps the recommendation
8 could be to discuss with the states, or whoever
9 they have the cooperative agreement with, to put
10 forth their recommendation for next languages to
11 tackle. I think it would be very difficult for
12 us to get to that level of specificity with the
13 recommendation. We're 25 people. I don't think
14 that we have a broad enough scope, honestly, to
15 be able to recommend next languages. I think
16 taking that suggestion of concrete steps to take
17 to determine what those might be might be
18 helpful.

19 MR. MCREYNOLDS: So perhaps some
20 language to add to the end of Recommendation 2
21 might be comma, and should consult with
22 stakeholders to identify the top priority

1 candidates -- or the top priority languages for
2 further development.

3 MS. KNORR: And consult with
4 stakeholders, I think.

5 MR. MCREYNOLDS: Yes, stakeholders to
6 determine.

7 MS. KNORR: Any other places on the
8 training, issues, comments? Moving on to the
9 water recommendation.

10 MR. MCREYNOLDS: Again, this is an
11 area where Congress has specifically given USDA a
12 role. As we talked about extensively yesterday,
13 and as are talked about at just about every
14 industry meeting you go to today about these
15 water rules, there are major challenges. FDA has
16 acknowledged them. Again, the purpose here is to
17 give the secretary our input about what the
18 secretary should be asking for, as the potential
19 revision of the water rules moves forward.

20 I do want to flag, Dave asked a
21 question yesterday, comparison of the microbial
22 criteria in the produce rule compared to

1 international standards. The World Health
2 Organization establishes a fecal coliform
3 concentration of 1,000 CFUs per 100 milliliters
4 of water as acceptable.

5 If we think that countries -- if we
6 think that the foreign supplier verification
7 program is going to end up with growers in South
8 America and Africa and Southeast Asia coming down
9 to 128 CFUs, when they're operating at 1,000
10 right now, that's not likely to happen.

11 There's definitely a competitive risk,
12 besides a lack of -- and the fact that the World
13 Health Organization has a different level
14 suggests that there is scientific uncertainty
15 about the microbial criteria. Therefore, it's a
16 really important subject for further
17 investigation in the regulatory process.

18 MS. KNORR: Does anybody have anything
19 else to bring to the table here? Clearly, the
20 group did a lot of homework on this particular
21 recommendation. Any comments or questions,
22 modifications suggested?

1 MS. BAILEY: Melissa Bailey, with
2 USDA. Just for the purpose of the record, we did
3 do some back and forth with the subcommittee on
4 this recommendation leading into the meeting
5 today and appreciate Roland's help in revising
6 some of that. We do still have concerns about --
7 there's a sentence in there about saying,
8 essentially, USDA should ask or have FDA withdraw
9 the water quality or water aspects of the rule.

10 Just so the committee understands our
11 process, I think we still are concerned about us
12 directing another agency, as far as what they
13 should or shouldn't do with their regulations.
14 In general, we don't play that role. Rather,
15 what we often do, and what we have done in the
16 case with the FSMA requirements, is when the rule
17 is developed, we go through an interagency review
18 process, and we get to weigh in up front, as
19 rules go through clearance, and then, of course,
20 certainly participate after the public comment
21 and the final rules are drafted. I just think
22 it's important for the committee to understand

1 the department has weighed in previously on those
2 requirements. That aspect of the recommendation
3 does put us in a bit of a challenging position.
4 Thanks.

5 MS. KNORR: Any reactions to that
6 statement? I can certainly understand that we
7 don't want to put the USDA in an awkward
8 position. However, this does greatly impact
9 fruit and produce industry. We are also treading
10 a fine line on how to make sure that the impacts
11 and the challenges to the industry are stated
12 clearly, with enough impact that the changes that
13 we feel are necessary are communicated well.
14 Thoughts on how we might skirt that line a little
15 bit more effectively?

16 MR. MCREYNOLDS: Madam Chair, I would
17 also flag that we saw the pictures last week or
18 two weeks ago of Secretary Purdue sitting down
19 with farmers and their new Rural and Agriculture
20 Advisory Committee that has 180-day window to
21 conduct a review of several areas of regulation.
22 They listed FSMA as one of them. This is input

1 that the secretary will receive and can take into
2 account when he's part of that working group,
3 which is operating outside of -- it's sort of an
4 umbrella over those issues. Again, I recognize
5 that this is a strong recommendation. I
6 recognize the challenges.

7 At the same time, this is a critical
8 juncture, with both the implementation time frame
9 of the rule and the fact that this review is
10 underway, both at FDA and through the president's
11 Rural and Agriculture Advisory Group. I feel
12 like it's important for us to state, in no
13 uncertain terms, to the secretary, as he goes
14 through that process, what our industry's
15 concerns are.

16 Obviously, the secretary will do what
17 he wants to do. I think our charter states
18 clearly that we are supposed to be providing the
19 secretary with our insights about what would be
20 important to promote our industry. That is what
21 this material reflects.

22 MS. KNORR: Is there a way that we can

1 soften that statement slightly without damaging
2 the content thereof?

3 MR. NOLAN: Bob Nolan. Could you,
4 say, maybe modify that section of it, and then
5 put some other language in there to just soften
6 it a little bit, rather than withdraw totally,
7 modify that portion of it? I'm trying to be --
8 I'm trying to walk the line.

9 MR. MCREYNOLDS: Our information is
10 that the thing needs to be withdrawn. This is
11 what university researchers, this is what state
12 governments, this is what they're saying.

13 MS. KNORR: I am not picking bones
14 with the withdrawal portion, but more should urge
15 FDA. How do we make that statement without
16 making that statement, I guess, is what we're
17 asking? How do we state --

18 MR. MCREYNOLDS: Should urge
19 withdrawal of Subpart E, blah, blah, blah?

20 MS. HERRON: Johanna, would encourage
21 help, should encourage? It's more of a positive
22 word. I can see the dilemma because at the end

1 of the day, we just recommended to keep that
2 liaison, and we don't want to put USDA in a
3 position that could look like -- I can see the
4 dilemma. I wonder if a positive word would help,
5 or separating the sentence into another section
6 is the only other thing I can think of.

7 MS. MORRIS: This is Erin Morris. We
8 totally understand your point, Roland, and
9 certainly understand that there are concerns, and
10 that those concerns need to be addressed. As I'm
11 sure you've all read, Secretary Purdue has made
12 statements about making sure that USDA decision
13 making is science based.

14 It could be that your suggestion to
15 change that particular word might be helpful if
16 it is constructed in a more positive way. I
17 think ultimately, we'll have to see, based on the
18 input that we got from FDA yesterday, what they
19 decide to do, but it seems like, from what we
20 heard yesterday, they do understand that there
21 are a number of aspects of the rule that they
22 need to take a look at.

1 MR. JANIS: How about something in
2 effect of a full evaluation, and then including
3 urging them to withdraw, but sort of -- as
4 opposed to a sole just withdrawing on the
5 withdrawal portion, urged to withdraw, adding
6 something to the effect of a full evaluation,
7 including withdrawal. As opposed to just a sole
8 action of withdrawing, that there would be a --
9 it'd be amongst things that are considered.

10 MR. MCREYNOLDS: If you don't feel
11 like that is reflected in the other language
12 that's already there, in terms of recommending
13 engagement/coordination in this plan to revisit
14 the water requirements --

15 MR. JANIS: I was just adding that as
16 a suggestion to try to thread the needle a little
17 bit. That's all.

18 MS. SKELTON: Can I muddy the water a
19 little bit? How about something like should
20 encourage FDA to consider the stated opportunity
21 to revisit the water requirements as an indicator
22 for possible withdrawal?

1 MR. MCREYNOLDS: Say that again.

2 MS. SKELTON: Should encourage FDA to
3 consider the stated opportunity to revisit --
4 because they have made that public statement;
5 they're going to revisit the water requirements
6 -- as an indicator for possible withdrawal of
7 subpart blah, blah, blah.

8 MS. BETTS: One more time, slowly,
9 Leanne, should encourage FDA to --

10 MS. SKELTON: Should encourage FDA to
11 consider -- there. It gets it recognizing that
12 they've said they're going to revisit it. It
13 keeps your withdrawal in there. It encourages
14 them.

15 MS. KNORR: Yes, I think we're all
16 coming to the same place. I was going to suggest
17 revisit and potentially suggest withdrawal.

18 MS. SKELTON: Then what did you just
19 say, Beth?

20 MS. KNORR: I said revisit and
21 potentially withdraw.

22 MR. MCREYNOLDS: For possible review

1 and -- for review and possible withdrawal?

2 MS. KNORR: Correct, yes, not possible
3 review. I think we definitely know that this
4 needs to be reviewed, but review and possible
5 withdrawal.

6 MR. MCREYNOLDS: I think withdrawal of
7 -- yes, I believe that this language would
8 continue to reflect what the working group's
9 intent --

10 (Simultaneous speaking.)

11 MS. KNORR: Intent, okay.

12 MR. MCREYNOLDS: Madam Chair, I'd like
13 to make a motion for acceptance of all three of
14 these Food Safety Working Group recommendations,
15 as revised here in our meeting this morning.

16 MR. WILLIAMS: This is Tom Williams,
17 and I second.

18 MS. KNORR: Any further discussion?

19 (No audible response.)

20 MS. KNORR: All in favor, say aye.

21 (Chorus of aye.)

22 MS. KNORR: Any nays?

1 (No audible response.)

2 MS. KNORR: Abstentions?

3 (No audible response.)

4 MS. KNORR: Hearing none, the
5 recommendations are passed. Thank you, Roland
6 and Food Safety Subcommittee members for your
7 clearly demonstrated hard work on all of those
8 issues. Thanks very much.

9 MR. MCREYNOLDS: I want to
10 particularly recognize Dan Sutton and Kathy Burns
11 for their particular work on these
12 recommendations, as well.

13 MS. KNORR: Are any of the existing
14 subcommittees ready with a recommendation or
15 statement at this time?

16 MS. KNORR: Excellent.

17 MS. BETTS: I'm sorry, I can't --

18 MS. DIETRICH: Yes, I emailed the
19 Broadband to you, Marlene.

20 MS. BETTS: This morning?

21 MS. DIETRICH: Yes.

22 MS. BETTS: Okay. Let me see if I can

1 bring that up; working on the fly here.

2 MS. DIETRICH: I got a reply that you
3 were out of the office.

4 MS. BETTS: There you go. Imagine
5 that.

6 MS. DIETRICH: In the meantime, while
7 she's pulling that up, I just wanted to say that
8 Beth and I have had some emails back and forth
9 about it. We're basically the only two on the
10 committee. It seems to us that every state has
11 their own way of dealing with broadband.

12 We just wanted to put something
13 together that was very broad -- in broadband --
14 that was just very broad and just gave the
15 secretary the idea that it's something that's
16 really important to agriculture, and it needs to
17 be addressed. It's something that is vital to
18 our economy. While we're waiting, do you want me
19 to read it?

20 MS. KNORR: Yes, go ahead and read it,
21 Helen.

22 MS. DIETRICH: It's only two

1 paragraphs, about four or five sentences. Access
2 to affordable and fast Internet connectivity is
3 vital to the success of rural agriculture and
4 rural education. Broadband connectivity has
5 become a necessity, like electricity, and is a
6 fundamental part of agriculture, business,
7 education, healthcare, and public safety.

8 The USDA Fruit and Vegetable Industry
9 Advisory Committee would like to emphasize the
10 importance of rural broadband connectivity in our
11 rural communities. The infrastructure of rural
12 America should include the development of
13 broadband. This should take into consideration
14 the speed, as well as the affordability, of
15 connectivity.

16 MR. MCREYNOLDS: Is it too early to
17 move to accept?

18 MS. KNORR: Not at all.

19 MR. MCREYNOLDS: I move to accept
20 that. Motion to accept it.

21 MR. NOLAN: Bob Nolan. I'll second
22 that.

1 MS. KNORR: Any discussion about the
2 matter at hand?

3 (No audible response.)

4 MS. KNORR: No? All in favor?

5 (Chorus of aye.)

6 MS. KNORR: Any nays?

7 (No audible response.)

8 MS. KNORR: Any abstentions?

9 (No audible response.)

10 MS. KNORR: Motion passed. Thank you,
11 Helen --

12 MS. DIETRICH: You're welcome.

13 MS. KNORR: -- for crafting that.

14 Carlos, do you have anything ready to share with
15 the group at this time?

16 MR. CASTANEDA: Sure. At this point,
17 it'd be more of a statement than a
18 recommendation, but I'd love to get the group's
19 feedback. The first point that our committee
20 came up with, in today's climate, we're hearing a
21 lot about fiscal responsibility. We're concerned
22 that any cuts to the departments that participate

1 in the processing of H2A could be catastrophic.
2 As you all know, this program has been
3 skyrocketing in use across the country. Due to
4 it being the only tool that we have available for
5 agriculture, any cuts in it would be nothing less
6 than a catastrophe.

7 We would recommend that -- we
8 currently commend all the departments that are
9 participating in the processing because unlike
10 other years, we haven't seen any delays in the
11 processing of ETA-790, or any other forms, with
12 the state departments. However, our concern lies
13 in the U.S. consulates in Mexico.

14 The appointments that we need to
15 receive for processing for the actual interview
16 for the employees, that's where we see the
17 bottleneck occurring. We're finding some issues
18 in getting an appointment, or the timeliness of
19 the appointment. I'll give you an example.

20 If your date of need is March 1st,
21 you're probably going to be at the consulate two
22 or three days before that, and you need that

1 appointment two or three days before March 1st to
2 get them to your farm by March 1st. We're
3 finding that when you call the consulate, they
4 don't have openings on the days that you need
5 them, especially for big groups. We've noticed
6 that the closing of processing in Guadalajara and
7 in Mexico City, at those consulates, the
8 consulates are physically open, but they're no
9 longer processing H2A visas. We're concerned of
10 is this the tip of the iceberg?

11 Are they planning on closing others?
12 What are the reasons for those closings? Again,
13 I emphasize the importance of this program
14 because it is the only tool that we have
15 available for agriculture. I commend all the
16 departments that participated in it because
17 again, they've done a fantastic job.

18 I think they've really figured out how
19 to ramp up -- because you can go on the federal
20 database; you'll see that the use of this is
21 going through the roof. That'd be the first
22 point that I'd ask for the group's consideration.

1 The second point is, as you all are aware, the
2 lack of movement on comprehensive immigration
3 reform has given us, again -- it's highlighted
4 the only option that exists once again is H2A.
5 For those domestic skilled employees that live in
6 the U.S., that want to, let's say, come clean and
7 apply for this program have to self-deport into
8 Mexico and apply for the program. However, we
9 have this little issue called the three/ten bar.
10 When that comes up at the U.S. consulate
11 appointment, they're barred.

12 Any employee that has been living in
13 the U.S. undocumented for less than a year is
14 barred from re-entry for three years. Anyone
15 who's been living here for longer than a year is
16 barred for up to ten years. That is
17 catastrophic. We have some board members here
18 that have felt the pains of this recently.

19 I have many growers that have suffered
20 from the same. We're talking about skilled
21 employees that, again, want to do things by the
22 book, and they're getting punished. I know it's

1 an act of Congress to change anything on
2 three/ten bar, but I know a waiver has been
3 considered on previous proposals across the
4 country. I think a waiver for those that want to
5 come clean should be brought to attention here.
6 That's all I have.

7 MS. KNORR: Thank you, Carlos. I
8 assume that you're going to be taking some time
9 today to craft a final statement to share? Okay,
10 fantastic. Does anyone else -- do any of the
11 other groups have a completed statement they'd
12 like to bring forth at this time? No? Any new
13 members, if you haven't done so already, please
14 connect with the chairs of the groups you'd like
15 to participate in.

16 I'd also open it up to hear from folks
17 about additional committees you're interested in
18 forming. Crop insurance certainly was one that
19 was brought up. I'd also like to bring up a
20 committee on SNAP technology and the Food and
21 Security Nutrition Incentive Program. I don't
22 anticipate having anything available today, but

1 we'd like to form a group to discuss SNAP
2 technology.

3 A little bit of background on that.
4 What's happening right now is there are funds in
5 the farm bill to make it possible for farmers'
6 markets to begin to accept SNAP at their
7 locations. This has been encouraged over the
8 past five years pretty heavily. What has been
9 happening now is that farmers' market
10 organizations, if they have multiple farmers'
11 markets that they manage, have to get a separate
12 piece of equipment for each, individual market
13 location that they have because the technology
14 does not exist to switch their FNS numbers, which
15 are the numbers that allow them to accept SNAP,
16 between locations.

17 If you're managing a market on
18 Thursday evening, from 4:00 to 7:00, you have to
19 have a SNAP number for that, and if you manage a
20 market again on Saturday, you have to have a
21 separate SNAP number, but the equipment that you
22 have will not allow you to toggle between those

1 two numbers, so you don't need to have multiple
2 pieces of equipment.

3 What that means is you have to have
4 multiple pieces of equipment. Many of these
5 farmers' market organizations are managed by
6 volunteers. They don't always have robust
7 funding, but they're often situated in
8 neighborhoods specifically to increase access to
9 healthy foods, produce, in particular.

10 This is a definite barrier to people
11 being able to purchase produced. This is a group
12 that I'd like to form, to maybe get a little bit
13 more information from FNS as to what they're
14 trying to do to address that issue, so that
15 market organizations don't need to have eight
16 different iPads to swipe customer cards. If
17 anyone is interested, please see me. Crop
18 insurance, please see Mack. Are there any other
19 groups that want to form?

20 MR. NOLAN: Beth, Bob Nolan. We still
21 have the New Farmer Advocacy and Mentoring
22 Working Group, so those people who are on that,

1 maybe we'll get together here and see if we want
2 to continue with that and review what -- I have a
3 few minutes from our last meeting -- and see if
4 we want to go further with that.

5 Some of us are on multiple groups, so
6 I'm going to say for my group, I'm with the Labor
7 Group, so maybe a half hour from when we break,
8 we'll go to my group, then, after that, those who
9 are interested. Maybe we should put kind of a
10 time limit when we should reconvene. I don't
11 know what that should be, but we probably should
12 do that.

13 MS. KNORR: I think right now, given
14 we are set to adjourn at 1:00, we have plenty of
15 time for each of those groups to get together,
16 but perhaps we could -- it's 9:30 right now. I'm
17 going to encourage everyone to meet with their
18 group for an hour, until 10:30. If you have a
19 second group, from 10:30 to 11:30. Let's get
20 back here by 11:30 to bring forth any
21 recommendations or statements, or share next
22 steps with the other groups that have newly

1 formed.

2 MR. MCREYNOLDS: I don't know how
3 other groups are feeling, but an hour seems like
4 a lot. No? Okay.

5 MS. KNORR: It's fair. If you don't
6 need an hour, perhaps jumping into another group
7 or having a conversation about next steps with
8 your existing group is all that you need, and
9 that's fine, too.

10 MR. NOLAN: Bob Nolan. I'll just say
11 that if the chair people are done with your
12 group, come to us, let us know, and we can
13 reconvene the meeting earlier. As long as
14 everybody's complete, then we can start again, so
15 just let us know.

16 MS. BETTS: This is Marlene. While
17 everybody's on break -- I think we talked about
18 it yesterday, Beth and Bob, about potential next
19 meeting. I know there's a lot of things that are
20 still up in the air, but if you could look at
21 your schedules for September and October, let us
22 know absolutely no good time frames, so we can

1 kind of narrow it down a little bit and try to
2 get our arms around that, to see if we can get on
3 the stick a little bit quicker this next time
4 around. If you could look at that, and then
5 bring that back when you come, that would be
6 awesome, as well.

7 MS. KNORR: Yes, and also, check out
8 time is 11:00, so if you haven't done so already,
9 feel free to -- it's noon?

10 MS. BETTS: Noon, at the latest, yes.

11 MS. KNORR: You can use that time to
12 do so.

13 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter
14 went off the record at 9:28 a.m. and resumed at
15 11:33 a.m.)

16 MS. KNORR: I think once Marlene gets
17 set up, we're going to go ahead and jump back in.
18 I think we're ready to get going, and I think we
19 have recommendations or statements from four
20 separate groups. Nice work, everyone. First,
21 let's hear from the Produce Consumption Group.
22 Christie, do you want to share some information

1 on that?

2 MS. BALCH: Sure. Our first
3 recommendation was that -- it started out as a
4 statement in support of certain programs, but
5 then we converted it into a recommendation in
6 support of a bunch of the programs we've learned
7 about over the past few months, on our calls, and
8 then yesterday, in the presentations.

9 We wanted to call out specific
10 programs under AMS, and also programs under FNS.
11 Then the second recommendation is a little more
12 specific, but it came out of our last conference
13 call. It was in regards to AMS assisting FNS
14 with the promotion of Team Nutrition.

15 MS. BETTS: Just let me know if you
16 want me to scroll back up to the first one. I
17 don't know how you want to do it, if you want to
18 take one at a time, or -- do you want it read in?
19 Do you want to start with the second one, since
20 it's kind of the simplest, Christie, or do you
21 want to read it in? How do you want to work it?

22 MS. BALCH: I can read the second one.

1 The introduction is the USDA Fruit and Vegetable
2 Industry Advisory Committee recognizes the value
3 of the Food and Nutrition Service's Team
4 Nutrition Program, which supports the child
5 nutrition programs through training and technical
6 assistance. Team Nutrition provides high
7 quality, evidence-based nutrition education
8 resources for free to eligible schools.

9 However, due to a lack of awareness of
10 the program across the country, only
11 approximately 50 percent of eligible schools
12 participate. Our recommendation is the USDA
13 Fruit and Vegetable Industry Advisory Committee's
14 Produce Consumption Working Group recommends that
15 the Food and Nutrition Service partner with the
16 Agricultural Marketing Service to increase
17 awareness about Team Nutrition resources across
18 the country.

19 MS. KNORR: I'm happy to accept a
20 motion. Actually, we should probably talk about
21 both of them. Any questions or concerns about
22 this one? No?

1 MR. MCREYNOLDS: I would just say that
2 structurally, the committee, our whole committee
3 -- I would redact the reference to the specific
4 working group because we're speaking as a full
5 committee --

6 (Simultaneous speaking.)

7 MS. BETTS: You want me to go ahead
8 and delete that?

9 MS. BALCH: Yes.

10 MS. BETTS: Okay. I think that is --
11 Roland's correct that the working groups can't
12 actually recommend to the secretary, that it does
13 have to come -- so thank you, Roland.

14 MS. BALCH: Can you just do two more
15 backspaces? Get rid of the apostrophe S, thank
16 you. Any other comments or questions on this
17 one? Okay, we can go to the first one. The
18 background is the USDA Fruit and Vegetable
19 Industry Advisory Committee recognizes the
20 well-documented high rates of diet-related
21 disease among Americans.

22 Increased fruit and vegetable

1 consumption can combat these public health
2 problems, and healthy habits formed in childhood
3 can last a lifetime. There's a growing body of
4 evidence that farm to school programs increase
5 participant consumption, willingness to try, and
6 access to fruits and vegetables. Furthermore,
7 USDA child nutrition programs increase ability
8 and interest in incorporating healthier foods
9 into family diets, increase success of school
10 meal programs, and reduce food waste. In
11 addition to public health benefits, increased
12 produce consumption is beneficial to specialty
13 crop producers and other supporting businesses in
14 our industry. Our recommendation is that the
15 USDA -- can you make the same edit as before?

16 MS. BETTS: Yes.

17 MS. BALCH: I'll just read it with the
18 edit. The USDA Fruit and Vegetable Industry
19 Advisor Committee emphasizes our support for USDA
20 programs that increase fruit and vegetable
21 consumption, while supporting our industry.

22 These programs include Agricultural

1 Marketing Service's Commodity Procurement
2 Program, the Unprocessed, Fresh Fruit and
3 Vegetable Pilot Program, and the Department of
4 Defense Fresh Produce Program, Food and Nutrition
5 Service's Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program and
6 Farm to School Program. The committee strongly
7 recommends that USDA continue to offer these
8 programs and consider increased funding to the
9 programs to meet demand, as is possible. Any
10 comments or questions?

11 MS. KNORR: I'd be happy to take a
12 motion.

13 MR. MCREYNOLDS: Motion to adopt the
14 recommendation, Roland.

15 MS. BALCH: Can a member of the
16 working group second it? Okay, Christie Balch, I
17 second.

18 MS. KNORR: All in favor? Oh, any
19 discussion on this?

20 (No audible response.)

21 MS. KNORR: All in favor?

22 (Chorus of aye.)

1 MS. KNORR: Any nays?

2 (No audible response.)

3 MS. KNORR: Abstentions?

4 (No audible response.)

5 MS. KNORR: Motion passes. Thank you,
6 Christie. Next, we have something from the
7 Market News Group.

8 MR. WILLIAMS: This is Tom Williams,
9 on behalf of the working group for the Market
10 News. As we heard yesterday, our group crafted a
11 statement for supporting the continued funding of
12 the market news. The background, the mission of
13 the Agricultural Marketing Service is to
14 administer programs that create domestic and
15 international marketing opportunities for U.S.
16 producers of food, fiber, and specialty crops.

17 One such product that AMS currently
18 uses to assist the produce industry in the
19 marketing and distribution of fruits, vegetables,
20 and specialty crops is the Market News, which
21 provides unbiased price and sales information,
22 utilizing wholesale, retail, and shipping point

1 data that it collects and analyzes.

2 This information is made available
3 through the Market News website,
4 <https://www.ams.usda.gov/market-news>. Market
5 news is funded through appropriations in the USDA
6 budget, and the reports generated through the
7 website are efficiently and electronically
8 delivered to the user.

9 Our statement of support is AMS Market
10 News provides timely, detailed information to
11 farmers, producers, and other agricultural
12 businesses to help them accurately assess the
13 market conditions and, thus, make informed
14 decisions regarding the marketing, purchasing,
15 and distribution of fruits, vegetables, and
16 specialty crops. We believe that the Market News
17 provides a vitally important service to the
18 produce industry, while additionally aligning
19 with the mission of AMS, and we ask the secretary
20 to continue to have USDA fully fund Market News
21 and keep it an unbiased source of key
22 information. Any comments?

1 MS. KNORR: Nicely crafted. I'd
2 accept a motion.

3 MR. HANAS: So moved.

4 MS. ELLOR: I'll second, Tina Ellor.

5 MS. KNORR: Any discussion?

6 (No audible response.)

7 MS. KNORR: All in favor?

8 (Chorus of aye.)

9 MS. KNORR: Any nays?

10 (No audible response.)

11 MS. KNORR: Abstentions?

12 (No audible response.)

13 MS. KNORR: Motion carries. Next, can
14 we hear from the Labor Group, Carlos?

15 MS. BETTS: I think we have three
16 labor. Do you want me to just go down through
17 one at a time here?

18 MR. CASTANEDA: That is correct. We
19 have three recommendations.

20 MS. BETTS: I guess we'll --

21 (Simultaneous speaking.)

22 MR. CASTANEDA: You can start it

1 wherever you wish.

2 MS. BETTS: We'll start at the bottom
3 and work our way up. How does that sound?

4 MR. CASTANEDA: Perfect.

5 MS. BETTS: I think this is No. 1.

6 MR. CASTANEDA: This is Carlos, with
7 the Labor Committee. What we thought of -- the
8 background on this is we're finding that several
9 of our long-term employees in our industry are
10 volunteering to use the H2A program, but they
11 find that once they go to Mexico and apply for
12 this program, the three/ten bar is not allowing
13 them to re-enter.

14 So we feel that this needs to be
15 addressed. Our recommendation reads that we
16 recommend the three/ten bar be waived for those
17 employees that would like to voluntarily sign up
18 for the H2A Program. Does the committee have any
19 questions on the background? Is everyone
20 familiar with the three/ten bar?

21 MS. KNORR: Barring any questions or
22 comments, can we go ahead and move to the next

1 one?

2 MR. CASTANEDA: Absolutely. Would you
3 like to make a motion on this one? There are
4 three separate recommendations.

5 MS. KNORR: Let's try to do all of
6 them in one fell swoop.

7 MR. CASTANEDA: Okay, fair enough.
8 This one's short and sweet, right to the point.
9 This program is the only tool that we have for
10 agriculture. There's a lot of rumors. We need
11 to understand that these are just rumors, but
12 that's where some of these ugly bills begin.

13 There's a lot of rumors that they want
14 to place a cap on this program, and that would be
15 devastating to our industry. That's where this
16 recommendation comes from. The vital nature of
17 the H2A program, we strongly recommend that no
18 cap be imposed. Any questions?

19 MS. KNORR: I'm just having a question
20 about what kind of a cap? Is it total number of
21 H2As that can be issued?

22 MR. CASTANEDA: That is correct. A

1 little bit of background on that is the sister
2 program, if you will, that's non-agriculture, is
3 the H2B program, currently has a cap of 66,000.
4 Those that participate in that can tell you that
5 it's a failure --

6 (Simultaneous speaking.)

7 MR. CASTANEDA: -- absolutely. Why
8 duplicate a failure? They're speaking of
9 bringing a cap over to H2A, which currently, H2A
10 does not have a cap. We absolutely cannot live
11 with a cap in this program. The growth of this
12 is exponential. The maximum number is yet to be
13 determined. For that reason, we need to leave
14 this open, with no cap.

15 MR. MCREYNOLDS: I would suggest, just
16 to clarify, no cap on the number of workers
17 authorized under the H2A program, just to make
18 that crystal clear, what we're advocating for
19 here.

20 MR. CASTANEDA: Labor Committee okay
21 with that?

22 (Chorus of aye.)

1 MR. CASTANEDA: Fair enough; that
2 sounds excellent.

3 MS. BETTS: Does that cover what you
4 were talking about, Roland?

5 (Off microphone comments.)

6 MS. BETTS: How is that, good?

7 MR. CASTANEDA: Yes. I still think
8 that expresses what we were trying to get to, so
9 that's excellent, well received.

10 MS. KNORR: Perfect.

11 MS. BETTS: Okay, last one now?

12 MS. KNORR: The next one, please.

13 MR. CASTANEDA: What we did on the
14 background on this one is we wanted to help
15 everyone understand that agriculture still
16 supports a comprehensive immigration reform. We
17 put that in there, in the background to this
18 recommendation. Our concerns have been that the
19 threats of government shutdowns have -- it
20 becomes a bottleneck if we don't determine the
21 staff that participates in processing this visa,
22 if we don't determine them essential. We're

1 finding that the current bottleneck we're seeing
2 -- and we're hoping it's not the tip of the
3 iceberg -- is where H2A visas are processed in
4 Mexico at our U.S. consulates, they've ceased to
5 process in Guadalajara and Mexico City, which are
6 vital highways that most of our employees are
7 seen coming through.

8 We're hoping that's not an action
9 that's going to continue to gain momentum. We'd
10 like to make it very clear that our
11 recommendation is that the H2A program be fully
12 funded, that staffing be adequate to accommodate
13 the growth of this essential program to meet the
14 workforce needs of our industry. Our second
15 recommendation there is we further recommend that
16 personnel assigned to H2A processing be deemed
17 essential, in case of a government shutdown.

18 The first recommendation would be,
19 once again, because of the exponential growth of
20 this program, we'd like to make it clear that our
21 government officials need to understand that this
22 program is absolutely -- it's growing at an

1 unbelievable pace, and we'd like them to
2 understand that they need to staff to whatever
3 number they see adequate to process the need or
4 the demand. Again, the second one is we can't
5 take the risk of government shutdowns closing
6 these offices because, as you know, our crops are
7 perishable.

8 MS. KNORR: Anyone have any questions
9 or comments for Carlos on this last
10 recommendation? I am open to receiving a motion.

11 MS. ELLOR: I would love to make that
12 motion, Tina Ellor, that we accept these three
13 recommendations, as edited.

14 MR. MCREYNOLDS: Roland McReynolds,
15 second.

16 MS. KNORR: Any discussion?

17 (No audible response.)

18 MS. KNORR: All in favor?

19 (Chorus of aye.)

20 MS. KNORR: Any nays or abstentions?

21 (No audible response.)

22 MS. KNORR: Motion carries. Thank you

1 very much, Carlos and working group, nice work.
2 Finally, the Grants and Research Committee.

3 MR. MCREYNOLDS: Yes, we have a
4 recommendation, as well, regarding investments in
5 infrastructure for the fruits and vegetable
6 industry.

7 MR. MCREYNOLDS: Yes, that's the one.

8 MS. BETTS: There we go.

9 MR. MCREYNOLDS: Okay, so.

10 MS. BETTS: Want to make sure you
11 understand.

12 MR. MCREYNOLDS: Yes, I didn't think
13 about that. Our background statement -- again,
14 this is built upon the presentations that we
15 heard yesterday about the value of these programs
16 that are available, as well as the risk that they
17 face in the current budget environment.

18 Statement reads USDA offers Loan Grant
19 Insurance Technical Assistance Programs in
20 support of infrastructure development through its
21 various agencies, including several agencies
22 listed there. These programs have substantial

1 benefits for the fruit and vegetable industry,
2 period. Due to the largely perishable nature of
3 fruits and vegetables, comma, delete makes --
4 it's good to read these out loud, actually. I'm
5 sorry. Federal loans or grant -- where are we?

6 MS. BETTS: Yes, where were you?

7 MR. MCREYNOLDS: Due to. The sentence
8 beginning due to. Oh, that's the old one. All
9 right. Well, I'll just keep reading.

10 MS. BETTS: I guess the new one didn't
11 --

12 MR. MCREYNOLDS: Didn't save, didn't
13 write over.

14 MS. BETTS: Didn't save, right. I
15 guess your reading will have to -- yes, we'll
16 have to just pull it -- you'll have to email it
17 to me.

18 MR. MCREYNOLDS: Okay.

19 MS. BETTS: Yes, it's the old one.

20 MR. MCREYNOLDS: Okay, sorry about
21 that, technical difficulty. Due to the largely
22 perishable nature of fruits and vegetables,

1 availability of distribution and infrastructure
2 is essential for producers to maximize the value
3 of their businesses. Federal loans or grants can
4 help bring private sector and philanthropic
5 partners to the table in making infrastructure
6 investments that enhance the competitiveness of
7 fruit and vegetable farmers and businesses.
8 Federal programs that provide technical
9 assistance or help stakeholders test their ideas
10 can set fruit and vegetable industry participants
11 up for greater success in accessing public or
12 private resources in the future and managing them
13 well.

14 For example, rural development
15 programs have been an historic success, both in
16 terms of business survivability rates and job
17 creation, and have been in great demand, with
18 applications exceeding the available funds.
19 Federal land conservation programs, such as
20 several programs listed, provide farmers
21 financing to enhance the critical natural
22 resource infrastructure that ensures their farms

1 will continue to be productive.

2 Successful USDA infrastructure
3 programs that support the fruit and vegetable
4 industry include the Rural Business and
5 Cooperative Service, the Business and Industry
6 Guaranteed Loan Program, the Value Added Producer
7 Grants, Rural Cooperative Development Grants,
8 Community Facilities Grants and Loans, the Local
9 Food Promotion Program, the Rural Energy for
10 America Program, farm microloans, farm storage
11 facility loans, and specialty crop block grants,
12 i.e. everything we got told about yesterday.

13 These programs also complement and
14 leverage other infrastructure investments across
15 other branches of state and federal government,
16 such as the Economic Development Administration
17 of the Department of Commerce, which has served
18 as a key financing partner on major local food
19 infrastructure projects around the country; the
20 Community Development Financial Institutions Fund
21 of the Department of the Department of the
22 Treasury, which certifies, finances, and trains

1 institutions that offer financial services and
2 build financial capacity in rural communities
3 that have traditionally faced significant
4 challenges in accessing mainstream financial
5 services; the Healthy Food Financing Initiative
6 of the CDFI, which facilitates financing of fruit
7 and vegetable access projects, such as farmers'
8 markets and urban farms in underserved urban and
9 rural communities; and the new market tax credits
10 at the Department of Treasury. These partnership
11 opportunities also increase efficiency and reduce
12 redundancies across agency missions and
13 activities. Our recommendation to propose for
14 your review, we strongly encourage the secretary
15 to be supportive for continued funding for these
16 effective USDA infrastructure investment
17 programs, including the Rural Business and
18 Cooperative Service, the Business and Industry
19 Guaranteed Loan Program, Value Added Producer
20 Grants, Rural Cooperative Development Grants,
21 Community Facilities Grants and Loans, the Local
22 Food Promotion Program, the Rural Energy for

1 America Program, farm microloans, farm storage
2 facility loans, specialty crop block grants, and
3 the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program,
4 the Conservation Reserve Program, the
5 Conservation Stewardship Program, and the
6 Environmental Quality Incentives Program.

7 We also recommend that in order to
8 ensure the producers have access to these
9 programs, that USDA continue to staff a robust
10 network of state and county service centers, and
11 service center staff should be encouraged to work
12 across other federal agencies and state
13 governments to leverage each other's resources
14 for increased investment in fruit and vegetable
15 industry infrastructure. That's our statement
16 and recommendation.

17 MS. BETTS: I'm sorry; I don't have
18 the most up-to-date version.

19 MR. MCREYNOLDS: It's mostly the same
20 stuff.

21 MS. BETTS: It's an IT glitch. It
22 almost locked my computer up.

1 MS. KNORR: Any questions for this
2 committee?

3 MR. VAZQUEZ: I guess, on the
4 aggregate, we're just recommending that the
5 budget for the USDA, in general, not be cut,
6 right? I mean, that's basically what we're
7 saying.

8 MR. MCREYNOLDS: Yes. And I think our
9 -- it makes sense for us, as an industry, to say
10 we value USDA programs, and we want them to
11 continue.

12 (Off microphone comment.)

13 We're the infrastructure -- well, you
14 know, and we are certainly intentionally using
15 language around infrastructure because we do
16 recognize that's a value in the administration.
17 I'm a lawyer.

18 MS. KNORR: One thing I would mention
19 that's kind of a bit of a pet peeve of mine,
20 farmers' markets should have an apostrophe after
21 the S on farmers.

22 (Off microphone comment.)

1 MS. KNORR: Well, they are wrong.

2 (Laughter.)

3 MS. KNORR: A bit of a strong opinion
4 on that. Sorry, guys. Starting to get a little
5 punchy. Sorry, everyone. Barring any further
6 questions or comments for Roland, I would accept
7 a motion on this recommendation.

8 MR. WILLIAMS: Tom Williams. I'll
9 make a motion.

10 MS. ELLOR: Tina Ellor. I'll second.

11 MS. KNORR: Any discussion?

12 (No audible response.)

13 MS. KNORR: All in favor?

14 (Chorus of aye.)

15 MS. KNORR: Any nays or abstentions?

16 (No audible response.)

17 MS. KNORR: Motion carries. Wow,
18 fantastic work this morning, folks.

19 MS. BETTS: There is one more, Beth,
20 on the Rural Broadband has a statement, also.

21 MS. KNORR: Correct. We did it this
22 morning, didn't we?

1 MS. BETTS: We approved that one?
2 Okay. I just wanted to make sure we got
3 everybody covered, I think. I think that's it.
4 Roland, if you could just --

5 MS. KNORR: Great job.

6 MS. BETTS: -- make sure --

7 (Simultaneous speaking).

8 MS. BETTS: Perfect. Awesome.

9 MS. KNORR: A couple of things before
10 we adjourn. As was mentioned yesterday, there
11 are a number of people whose current terms are
12 ending this time. I just want to encourage
13 everyone to please consider reapplying. We value
14 your input and participation. We'll wait to hear
15 from Marlene and Melissa regarding the
16 reauthorization of the group, which I think you
17 said typically happens in July, or potentially
18 can happen in July.

19 Or before? Okay, great. We'll wait
20 to hear back from you, but I would encourage
21 everyone to please consider reapplying to
22 participate. Also, Marlene had asked folks to

1 take a look at their calendars in September and
2 October, so if you have not passed that
3 information along to Marlene, either do so today
4 before you depart, or send her a quick email in
5 the next day or two, so that she can start
6 looking at dates that are going to work for a
7 fall meeting.

8 MS. BETTS: We already know that
9 October 19 through 21 is PMA, so we know that
10 one's a no-good date.

11 (Off microphone comment.)

12 MS. BETTS: United has public policy
13 in October, as well? Oh, September.

14 (Off microphone comment.)

15 MS. BETTS: It's usually around
16 September 11th, I've always found.

17 (Off microphone comment.)

18 MS. BETTS: Make sure you guys use the
19 microphone, please.

20 MR. CASTANEDA: Sounds like the week
21 of September 25th might not have any opposition.

22 MS. ELLOR: I can't make that, but I'm

1 not essential personnel, and I might not be
2 reappointed.

3 MS. BETTS: That's okay. We're --
4 (Simultaneous speaking.)

5 MS. BETTS: That's the end of our
6 fiscal year, too.

7 (Simultaneous speaking.)

8 MS. KNORR: Yes, I was getting ready
9 to say if we could try to stay away from the last
10 week of September or first week of October, they
11 generally shut down our travel systems to let us
12 process changing over the year. We would have
13 some potential administrative issues.

14 MS. KNORR: I think, at this point, if
15 we can just share with Marlene dates that we know
16 will not work, that gives her a little bit more
17 flexibility with trying to tackle some dates. Go
18 ahead and send those to her or mention them to
19 her before you leave today.

20 MR. NOLAN: Bob Nolan. I'd just like
21 to make a comment. I've talked to several
22 committee members, even at our last meeting,

1 whether we would consider taking this meeting on
2 the road, if the committee would like to do that?
3 I've spoken to Melissa, and she said it is
4 possible.

5 I guess we've got to check the details
6 and see if we have a financial budget we have to
7 stay within. I don't know if the committee would
8 like to entertain taking this on the road. I
9 would offer Long Island as a location. If the
10 committee's interested in that, that's -- be
11 happy to do it.

12 (Off microphone comment.)

13 MR. NOLAN: Depends on my H2A
14 situation.

15 I have some labor camp housing where
16 you guys can stay, so, you know, we'll keep the
17 cost down.

18 (Laughter.)

19 MR. NOLAN: So I don't know if the
20 committee wants to discuss it, at this point, or
21 we just leave it out as a suggestion and do it by
22 email. You guys can let me know. The flight

1 from Alaska's not that much longer. It's just up
2 the road.

3 I'm just throwing it out there, what
4 you folks want to do. September, if it makes no
5 difference to the staff, it's probably a little
6 better time, a little bit warmer. The third week
7 in September or second week, somewhere in there,
8 versus October. October's still nice, but
9 September is perfect, for what it's worth.

10 MR. CASTANEDA: Bob, do you have the
11 facilities to host something like this, as far as
12 a conference room and --

13 MR. NOLAN: Yes. Out in Riverhead,
14 New York, there's several hotels, which have
15 enough room for us to do that. There's also an
16 FSA agency out there, as well.

17 MR. CASTANEDA: Excellent. Should I
18 make a motion?

19 MS. KNORR: I'm not sure that there's
20 a motion necessary for that. I think that we've
21 shared our interest in doing that with the USDA
22 staff, so I'm confident that they're going to

1 look into some options there for us. Thank you
2 for offering, Bob.

3 MR. NOLAN: It's either to -- Southwest
4 flies right into Islip-MacArthur. If you guys
5 have access to Southwest, that's the way to go.
6 You miss all the city traffic. It's about a half
7 hour ride out to Riverhead from there. If you
8 fly into JFK, on a normal day, it's an hour ride,
9 on a rush-hour ride, it's about three hours.
10 Traffic is terrible morning and afternoon for
11 rush hour. You think LA's bad. It's
12 Islip-MacArthur, on Long Island. Southwest has a
13 hub, flies right in.

14 MS. KNORR: I just want to take a
15 moment to thank everyone for making the time to
16 come out here for this meeting. I think you all
17 should be commended for the tremendous amount of
18 work that you've done over the past two days and
19 the recommendations and statements that we've
20 made and passed. Thank all of you for all of
21 that work. I don't really have anything else to
22 add. I know a couple of people have some

1 flights. Marlene, do you have any administrative
2 things that need to be discussed?

3 MS. BETTS: I'm not sure if Melissa or
4 Erin wanted to talk about it, but we did talk
5 during our break, as well. We made some changes
6 because we're all newbies to this, as well.
7 Certainly, again, give us some feedback. Did you
8 like the way the meeting ran? I know it was a
9 little bit different, maybe, than the last time.
10 I don't know. I don't have anything to compare
11 it to. But if you could tell us the positives or
12 the negatives that came out of this, how we can
13 improve and make things easier for you all. I
14 know you'll be hearing back from me, especially
15 the chairs of all the various committees. I'm
16 going to reach back out to all of you, make sure
17 we have the right people, when you want to hold
18 the next conference calls, what kind of speakers
19 do you need us to start looking towards?

20 We'll kind of take a breath because
21 I've got my other job to do, but I do want to
22 follow up. I know Melissa talked about the new

1 way of structuring the recommendations and
2 whatnot. You'll be getting a lot of information
3 from us just to kind of bounce things off of you
4 and keep us in the loop and keep things going.

5 Thank you so much for all of your
6 efforts and all of your help and your patience
7 with us and getting this together. To me, it was
8 a great meeting. So thank you, and I'll let
9 Melissa or Erin have any closing comments.

10 MS. BAILEY: Yes, thanks, Marlene.
11 Again, thank you so much for stepping up and
12 helping us organize this meeting. This sounds
13 almost like a minor detail, but one piece of
14 feedback I would have is simply I think the way
15 we structure, actually, the table could be better
16 in the future. I find this long table thing to
17 be a bit difficult because I can't -- you guys
18 probably can't see each other. I think just
19 having -- I think a few years ago, we had more of
20 a U format. I think that is just much more
21 conducive to a dialogue.

22 I think we'll definitely pursue that

1 for the next meeting and moving forward. That
2 sounds minor, but I think it just makes the
3 meeting flow much better. In general, again,
4 just for those that this may be their last
5 meeting, sincerely appreciate all your service on
6 the committee and echo Beth, in terms of
7 considering applying again when we get the
8 nomination notice out. Then for those who will
9 stay with us, hopefully we'll see you in, maybe,
10 New York, in September-October. I don't know if
11 Erin has anything closing to say.

12 MS. MORRIS: Yes, just real briefly
13 because I know everyone's ready to get out of
14 here. I just wanted to echo Beth's sentiments.
15 We really can't thank you enough for all of the
16 time and thoughtful, thoughtful effort that you
17 have put into this meeting and all the calls that
18 you do with your groups when we're in between
19 meetings. We really do consider this feedback
20 valuable, and we really need it to make sure that
21 we're communicating and understanding what's
22 important to the fruit and vegetable and

1 specialty crop industries. Again, thank you so
2 much to all of you for your service.

3 MS. KNORR: I'd just like to say thank
4 you to Marlene, Melissa and Erin for hosting us.
5 I know that putting these meetings together takes
6 an incredible amount of work and details and all
7 of that kind of stuff. Thank you all very much
8 for helping us to continue to participate in this
9 way. Thank you.

10 MS. BETTS: And Leanne Skelton, too,
11 behind the scenes help.

12 MR. CASTANEDA: I do have a question
13 on what is the formal process for suggesting a
14 speaker? Is it recommended via email? For
15 example, Labor Committee would obviously love to
16 have someone from the Department of Labor speak
17 on behalf of H2A, but how would you like for us
18 to approach that, nominating a speaker?

19 MS. BAILEY: This is Melissa. I think
20 that what worked well this time was for the
21 subcommittees who were meeting on an issue, they
22 just helped -- we reached out to them and said

1 are there any particular topics you would like to
2 hear about, and then we kind of figured out who
3 the best speakers would be. If you don't have an
4 active subcommittee, though, and you have a
5 person from Labor, certainly send that to us.
6 The farther ahead of time we have it, the easier
7 it is to pull those people in. I don't know that
8 beyond that, we have too formal of a process.

9 (Off microphone comment.)

10 MS. BAILEY: Just to both, for now, I
11 think would be great, thanks.

12 MS. KNORR: Does anybody else have
13 anything for the good of the cause?

14 MR. JANIS: I think on behalf of the
15 committee, we'd like to thank the co-chairs for
16 your leadership and everything they've done to
17 make this an effective meeting.

18 (Off microphone comment.)

19 MS. KNORR: Motion to adjourn. So
20 moved? Okay, thanks, everybody.

21 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter
22 went off the record at 12:11 p.m.)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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Advisory Committee Meeting

Before: USDA

Date: 05-10-17

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